

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany  
Sunday, February 2, 2025

### **Introduction to the day**

The glory of God is often revealed when and where it is least expected. God uses our lips to declare that glory, inexperienced and hesitant though they may be. God uses our love to demonstrate that glory and so urges us to exercise it. God uses Jesus of Nazareth, water and the word, bread and wine, to reveal God's glory where and when God chooses. Take heed, lest the glory of God slip through our midst unnoticed.

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

Almighty and ever-living God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and love; and that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

### **FIRST READING: Jeremiah 1:4-10**

A reading from Jeremiah.

*God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet and consecrates him in the womb. Jeremiah's task is to preach God's word amid the difficult political realities of his time, before the Babylonian exile. He is to make God known not only to Judah, but also to the nations.*

### **PSALM: Psalm 71:1-6**

From my mother's womb you have been my strength. (Ps. 71:6)

### **SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13**

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

*Christians in Corinth prided themselves on their spiritual gifts. Paul reminds them that God gives us many gifts through the Holy Spirit, but the purpose behind all of them is love, the kind of love that God showed us in Jesus Christ.*

### **GOSPEL: Luke 4:21-30**

The holy gospel according to Luke.

*People in Jesus' hometown are initially pleased when he says that God will free the oppressed. Their pleasure turns to rage when he reminds them that God's prophetic mission typically pushes beyond human boundaries so that mercy and healing are extended to those regarded as outsiders.*

### **GOSPEL MESSAGE - He Goes on His Way**

It wasn't so long ago that we sang a song about the "meek and mild" newborn Jesus. But we see he is anything but that in today's gospel! When he makes the audacious claim that Isaiah's messianic prophecy "has been fulfilled in [their] hearing" (Luke 4:21), the crowds are delighted and glad to claim him as one of their own.

Jesus instigates a conflict, though, by recalling instances in which Elijah and Elisha ministered to Gentiles instead of to the people of Israel. That the people of Capernaum so quickly turn on him

shows how easily we all become focused on ourselves, our status, and our desires, instead of on God's mission to reach those who do not yet know God's love. The crowd's reaction points, for example, to a perennial temptation in faith communities to prioritize insiders' preferences over ways to invite and make room for newcomers to hear the gospel. We are quick to draw lines around "our" people and look at anyone beyond those lines as an outsider. But what if Jesus leads us, as God led the prophets, to someone unexpected? How would we respond if Jesus called us to embrace people whose socioeconomic class or language is different from ours? Would we pick up stones if Jesus announced he was off to go bless folks who voted for *that* candidate?

Even though this story ends with the Nazareth crowd stuck in their anger, it offers hope for us when we find ourselves struggling with the call of Jesus. Luke tells us Jesus simply "went on his way" (v. 30). The crowd's rage could not deter Jesus from his path to the cross and the empty tomb. He redeems even those who deny, oppose, and reject him. Just so, our resistance does not prevail. No matter what our ways might be, his is the way of mercy for all. Jesus fulfills God's plan to rescue the world, to reconcile all creation!

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

With the Spirit of Christ shining upon us, let us boldly pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

God of eternal wisdom, we pray for your church, which is being transformed by your word. Bless the church with your wisdom and guidance. Let us notice and take part in the new thing you are doing. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Your creation sustains us and all living creatures. Grant us humility to acknowledge the ways we bring harm to the earth. Grant us courage to make effective change so that all lands and living things prosper. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Embolden leaders of nations, corporations, and all in authority, that they lovingly tend those in their charge. Help them to respond to all who cry out in need. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Provide for those whose hunger runs deep due to isolation, loneliness, or illness. We especially pray for Linda Boland, Sandra Gagnon, Shirley Glickman, Donna L. Hoffman, Claude Jeannotte, Cassie Jessup, Bill Lorbetskie, Glenda Panke, Barry Rogers, Marilyn Schneider, Danny Schultz, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom, Keith Weckwerth, Elaine Yourth, Harold Yourth, Stephanie Yourth, and those in long term care facilities and senior residences..Send your Spirit so that all are filled with your presence and experience welcome from their communities. In this moment of silence we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need your healing touch. (pause) God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the young people in our congregations. May their voices be celebrated. Give youth a place of honor and value among us. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We remember those who have gone before us. Let their faithful example continue to bear witness to us all. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We entrust our prayers to you, O God, in the sure and certain hope that your promise is revealed among the people.

**Amen.**

**LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**BLESSING**

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

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